

2. WHO IS THE ALPHA & THE OMEGA? (Sorting out Revelation 22: 12-13)

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“Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22: 12-13).

In the previous article we noted that the description of Yahweh God as **the Alpha and the Omega** is used only three (3) times in the entire Bible. All 3 occur in the book of **The Revelation**. Before the last of the three (our text above) the other two times are at **1:8** and **21:6** and in both of them the speaker is the LORD God, the Almighty. It should go without saying that Jesus Christ is *never* in all the Scriptures called the LORD God, and certainly not the Almighty.

However, some of my readers questioned whether this third occurrence at **22:13** might not, in fact, be a claim by Jesus Christ himself to also be **the Alpha and the Omega** and that therefore, my thesis is flawed.

If you have a **Red Letter Bible** where the direct speech from the lips of Jesus is in red print, you will see how the verse immediately preceding **22:13** is attributed to Jesus ... “Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to what he has done (v. 12). Therefore, since we are awaiting the Second Coming of Jesus who is going to judge and rule the world, it is argued that verse **13** surely must also be a claim made by Jesus to also be the Alpha and the Omega?

After all, even in this very book of **The Revelation** — not to mention the entire NT — Jesus Christ is said to be coming again in the clouds and that **every eye will see him, and they also who pierced him (1:7)**.

Furthermore, since there is no break in the text between the two verses to indicate a different speaker, why would we not logically think this way? Fair points. However, let's not rush to any premature conclusions before considering all the evidence.

In this ultimate chapter of the Bible there are various speakers. The LORD God Himself, John, an angel, Jesus, the Spirit and the Bride, all interact — as happens in normal conversation! Theologians have long recognised how challenging it is to determine who is speaking at these various times. So it's wise to proceed with care as we seek to unravel who is speaking when, and especially as it relates to the statement in verse **7, I am the Alpha and the Omega**.

DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN RED LETTER BIBLES

I own three Red Letter Bibles and not one of them agrees with the others as to which words belong to Jesus Christ in this final chapter. One of them has Jesus speaking all the verses at 7, 12-13,16 and 20 (NASB 2002). Another omits the last part of verse 7 only attributing to our Lord Jesus the words ... “Behold I come quickly ...”, then 12-13,16 and 20 (KJV: Words of Christ in Red, Thomas Nelson Inc.1972). But the NIV Study Bible, (10th Anniversary Edition) has all of verse 7, all of verses 12 through to 16 and then 20 in red.

These divergences should make us proceed with caution, especially since the red letters are interpretive ‘aids’. They are not inspired. They are not infallible, and they may not even be helpful here! (¹)

Despite their inconsistencies, at least they all agree that the first part of verse 7 was spoken by Jesus ... “I am the Alpha and the Omega”. However, my proposal is that even this part of the verse is not the words of Jesus!

Let me repeat that: Verse 7, whether in part or in full, should not be in red letters. I will show, in fact, that verse 7 is *Yahweh God Himself speaking through His angel*.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Given that there is no chapter break between Revelation 21 and 22 in the original manuscripts, I propose for this brief exposition that the best place to begin to sort out the speakers’ identities is from Rev. 21:9 onwards. This is where “The New Jerusalem” is revealed to John by an angel. (²)

An angel **talks** to John inviting him to come and see the glory of the Bride and the measurements of the New Jerusalem. John inserts his own commentary of what he is shown right on through to verse 6 of chapter 22 at which point John says “**Then he said to me ...**”. We are back to the very words of the angel himself now. (Are you still with me? I warned you it’s quite the challenge.)

Although the angel is speaking again, when we come to 22:7 there seems to be a sudden change from third-person reporting by the angel to direct first-person speech ... “Behold, I am coming quickly ...” Whose words are these? Red Letter Bibles notwithstanding, to suddenly, without warning, attribute these words to Jesus seems incongruous.

¹ In the first article we noted that the same Red Letter Bibles attribute Rev. 1:8 to Jesus, too. We dealt with that impossibility there.

² The chapter divisions in the Bible were introduced around 1227 by Stephen Langton, an Englishman. The verse divisions were introduced in the mid-16th century by Robert Estienne, who was the first to print a Bible with verse numbers in each chapter. So, neither the chapter divisions, nor verse numbering, are always in the most helpful places..

ASSUME NOTHING!

Should we assume that verse 7 is the Lord Jesus just because the speaker states that he is coming quickly? Not necessarily so, for the observant reader of **The Revelation** will have noted that **God Almighty** has previously said of Himself, “Behold, I am coming like a thief” (16:14-15). Here it is definitely God the Father who is speaking and He claims to be the One Who is coming like a thief to earth.

Thus, even our Red Letter Bibles for obvious reasons do not place these words in 16:14-15 in red print! And here is the point: This passage sets the pattern and expresses the same principle as 22:5-6 which **actually says these are the faithful and true words of the LORD God ... Who sent His angel to proclaim these things to His bond-servants which must shortly come to pass (v. 5).** These are the words of the LORD God of the holy prophets, “Behold, I am coming quickly! ... (v.6-7). This immediate context indicates the speaker in verse 7 in all likelihood is the LORD God Himself transmitting His message via the angel.

So, comparing both passages (16:14-15 with 22: 6-7) we see that the virtually identical words “Behold, I am coming like a thief” and “Behold, I am coming quickly!” are the words of the LORD God.

The fact that the angel changes from reporting God’s words in the third person in 22: 4-5 (“They shall see His face ... the LORD God gives them light ...”) to reporting God’s words in the first person in verse 7 (“Behold, I am coming quickly ...”) is explained by the common Biblical practice of **agency**.

The Jewish Law of Agency (*Shaliah*) is expressed in the dictum, “a person’s agent is regarded as the person himself” where any act done, or any word spoken, by an agent is regarded as having been personally performed by the one who commissioned that agent to act on his behalf. God’s emissaries often changed from third person reporting to direct first person speech without the original readers suffering from any confusion as to the speaker’s identity. (³)

JESUS INTRODUCES HIMSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME IN VERSE 16

There is another fact to consider here. Notice how in verse 8 a different speaker is definitely introduced ... **Now, I, John, saw and heard these things ...** We know that he was not the speaker in the previous verses, otherwise we have the intolerable situation where John would be claiming to be the one who is coming soon — to be the Alpha and the Omega as recorded in verse 7!

³ See *They Never Told Me This in Church!* for numerous examples of this principle in action (First Ed. pp64; Second Ed. pp63). An angel (or a prophet) sent with a message from the LORD God will often change seamlessly from speaking in the third person to the first person as though God Himself is the speaker. One example is from **Gen 31:11-13** where **an angel of God** says to Jacob **in a dream**, “I am the God of Bethel ... where you made a vow to Me”. See also **Ex. 23: 20ff**.

But note that immediately starting in the very next verse 9, how again it's the angel who continues to speak to John ... **And he said to me ...** and again at verse 10, **And he said to me ...** Then the angel repeats God's very own words yet again, **"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me..."** (verses 12-13). These words are the words of God as reported directly by the angel. They are not red-letter words!

Similarly, Jesus does not begin to speak until verse 16 when he must introduce himself by saying, **"I, Jesus ..."** This, in all likelihood, indicates that Jesus has not previously spoken until this moment in the narrative — all the way back since 21: 9.

So we may appeal to the same pattern for Jesus at verse 16 when he first introduces himself, **"I, Jesus, ..."**. The verses previous to his own introduction cannot be attributed to him, which means that Jesus does **not** say he is the Alpha and the Omega. John's and Jesus' introductions are the same pattern.

THE COMING ONE

Here's another important consideration. In **The Revelation** God is *often* described as **"the coming One"**. It's tucked away in the distinctive claim to Him being the One **Who is and Who was and Who is to come** (1:4,8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5, etc.). (⁴)

The English-only reader may be forgiven for thinking the description that God is the One **Who is and Who was and Who is to come** is simply a description of Yahweh's unchanging eternity — He is past, present and future — there never was a time when He did not exist, and never will be a time when He will cease to exist for He will continue to be what He always was and is for the future evermore.

This is true insofar as it goes. However, in describing Almighty God as **He Who is to come** a beautiful aspect from the Greek text is lost. We don't have here the simple future of the verb to be, "I will be" (ἔσομαι / *esomai*). Rather, we have the verbal participle which, in simple terms, means that Almighty God is **"the coming one"** (ὁ ἐρχόμενος / *ho erchomenos*). (⁵) (⁶)

The Expositor's Greek Testament notes the significance of this when it reads:- **"The coming one"** instead of "the one who will be" **corresponds with the keynote of the book, struck loudly in Rev. 1: 7** that it is **in and with His Messiah, Jesus, that God Himself comes**. This is a significant observation!

Generally speaking, there are many times in the Bible which speak of Yahweh Himself as coming at various points of history. A classic instance is **Deuteronomy 33:2** where **Yahweh came down from Sinai** and gives the Law, whereas other

⁴ Jesus is never called the One **Who is and Who was and Who is to come**. **Never**.

⁵ It is a present middle, nominative, singular verbal participle.

⁶ The promised Messiah was also said to be **the coming one**. He stepped out of God's promised future onto the world's stage.

explanatory passages tell us that the Law was mediated through angels and Moses (e.g. **Gal. 3: 19**). Speaking of a promised future when Israel will be saved, **Zechariah 14: 5** prophesies that **my God will come**. And, speaking in the context of the Last Day, **Jude** quotes a text written before Christ [BC] when he predicts that **the LORD [God] comes with ten thousands of his holy ones (1:14)**.

Thus, strictly speaking, when we talk about the Second Coming of Jesus, we are really talking about God Himself coming in and through the glorious executive power He has invested in His Son.

It's the same idea as saying that **God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19)**. It's not that God was Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and it's not that God **as** Christ comes again. God Himself comes by expressing His wrath through the *Parousia* / physical presence of the Lamb (see **Rev. 6: 15-17**).

In **The Revelation** the Lamb is always portrayed as sharing the Father's throne. He is often said to be sitting at God's right hand, sometimes as standing before the throne, but it's always **the throne of God and of the Lamb (7: 9-10; 22:1,3, etc.)**. There is only One who sits on the Throne and the Lamb is always seen **in the midst of the Throne (ἀνα μέσον or ἐν μέσῳ)** often in the company of others also in the midst of the throne (e.g. **Rev. 5: 6**).

Indeed, **eleven times** in the **The Revelation** Yahweh God is said to be the sole One Who **sits upon the throne (4: 9,10; 5:1,7,13; 6:16; 7:10,15;10:4; 20:11; 21:5)**. [This is the very same confession Jesus stated when he was here on earth when he said, **He who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it (Matt. 23:22)**. According to Jesus himself there is only One Who sits on the throne of God in heaven — the One he identified as his Father (**Matt. 23:9**)].

BUT WHAT ABOUT REVELATION 3: 21 YOU MAY ASK?

Certainly Jesus Christ sits in a place of shared authority on that throne but there is never any confusion as to Who alone is the Supreme Being on that throne — not even at **Rev. 3: 21** where Jesus says that because of his overcoming he has been granted to sit with my Father on His throne.

Christ's exalted position and status next to God is his reward for his sacrificial obedience (*cf* **Phil. 2: 9-11**). It means Jesus shares the government with God his Father because it is God's good pleasure to give him this highly exalted status. This same verse also says that Jesus has a throne of his own which he will grant to anybody who also overcomes ... **I will grant him to sit with me on my throne**.

This speaks of shared privilege and responsibility — not shared ontology, otherwise we have the crazy notion that the saints sitting on Jesus' throne are themselves Christ! *Sharing thrones is Bible-speak for shared authority, not shared Deity nor shared identity!*

Rev. 3: 21 tells us that Christ has been given his position to act in God's Name. Thus, the description of the Lamb **"in the midst"** (or, **"at the centre"**) of God's throne

is the Bible's way of saying that Jesus has been given the central role in the redemption of the creation and in its management on God's behalf. (The Lamb, we also note, is assisted by the four living-creatures in some ancillary way, followed in hierarchy by the 24 elders and then the saints).

Since God has given the Lamb this key and central role in the government of the new redeemed order to which He is bringing this universe, His throne is naturally called **the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1,3).** (⁷)

WHY JESUS IS NOT THE ALPHA & THE OMEGA IN REVELATION 22: 12-13

There are perfectly good reasons why the book of **The Revelation** is the only book in the Bible which calls Yahweh **the Alpha & the Omega**. Like all great narratives the conclusion to any great literature gathers up, summarises, draws all that's gone before, to a fitting climax.

Given that the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is the His-story of the great God of all Creation and Redemption, it would be incongruous then, if the author (who has made it perfectly clear in his previous two statements that only the LORD God is the Alpha & the Omega with exclusive claim to encompassing all things from beginning to end) should suddenly change his thesis and announce, 'Actually, all along I meant to say that Jesus is also the Alpha & the Omega!'

No, Jesus is **not** the Alpha & the Omega, in spite of what the Red-Letter Bibles try to promote. Only God the Father is the Alpha and the Omega because —

He **gave** the revelation to Jesus Christ in the first place (**1:1**)! He then authorised Jesus to pass it along. So ... the one called "**the God**" (as the Greek text reads) is the Originator of the contents of the book. Jesus is not the Alpha!

He is the God Who first sends greetings to the churches (before Jesus does) because He alone is **the One Who is, and Who was, and Who is the coming One** (**1:4**, etc.) Jesus is always 2IC (Second in Charge) and never the Alpha!!

He is called Jesus' **God and Father** (**1:6; 3:12**, etc.) and **the God and LORD of Christ** (**11: 15; 20:6**, etc.) throughout the book. So Jesus has a God above him!!

He alone is called **the LORD God, the Almighty** (**1:8, 11: 15; 16: 14; 21:22**, etc.). Jesus is **never** called the LORD God Almighty.

He is **the One Who sits on the throne** and Who has invited the Lamb to share that throne. Jesus shares the throne of his God because he is the one through whom God has redeemed the world (**5:6f**).

⁷ Interestingly, the angel draws a clear distinction between **the glory of God** who is the ultimate source of all light and illumination in that new Age (*cf* **Rev 21:23**) and the reflected light which comes through the Lamb who is described as **its lamp** (λύχνος / *lychnos*) — The *lychnos* was a lamp or a candle placed on a stand or candlestick and was portable. Indeed, the distinction between **the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb** is likened to that of **the sun and the moon** (**21:22-23**). Do note that in **Rev. 22: 5** where **the LORD God illumines them** that He is the source of all other light!

He is **the Immortal God** Who has never died, can never die, and from Whom the **Lamb, who was slain** and who **was dead**, receives the scroll of redemption (5: 7). Jesus our Lord Messiah died so cannot be the Eternal and Immortal God (1:18)!

He is **the One Who says, “Behold, I am coming like a thief!”** (16:15) when He comes **in and with His Messiah, Jesus**, to set up the Kingdom of heaven on earth. Jesus comes in the power and the glory of his Father God Who alone knows when that Day will be (Matt. 16:27; 24: 36).

He is **the One Who created all things and because of Whose will they existed and were created** (4:11; 14:7). And He promises that He will be the one to **make all things new** precisely because “**I am the Alpha & the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... and whoever overcomes “I will be his God and he shall be my son”** (21: 5-7). Jesus is never said in the Bible to have sons; he has brothers!

He is the **One Who receives the worship of the Lamb**. Jesus confesses that the LORD God alone is the origin of all holiness (15: 3ff)!

He is the One to Whom Jesus will finally **deliver up the kingdom ... so that the one God the Father may be all in all** — the Omega (I Cor. 15: 24)!

For these and many other reasons, Jesus is not and cannot be the Alpha and the Omega at **Revelation 22:12-13**.

LISTEN TO JESUS’ OWN TESTIMONY

In fact, in this final chapter Jesus introduces himself by saying he is **the shoot and the offspring of David**, which is to say, Jesus claims to be a real human being brought into the world according to the promises of the Almighty God (22:16). No human being pre-existed his own ancestors!

Also, in this final chapter Jesus calls himself **the bright morning star** which (as **Numbers 24: 17-19** prophesied) is the last great king arising from **Jacob** and who will hold the **royal scepter arising from Israel** (22:16)!

So, we gladly confess, we willingly bow the knees, we joyfully worship the only One Who encompasses all things (including His purposes in Christ Jesus), from beginning to end, from first to last, and all things in between, for —

He alone is **the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only God** Who is **the Alpha and the Omega** (cf First Tim 1:17). Worthy is Yahweh our God to receive all glory and honour and power and praise, and worthy is the Lamb who redeemed us to Almighty God by his blood and who has been seated next to Him for us! Amen.

